

Annam - the Himalayan Superbird and Tirukkural

Dr Naga Ganesan
Houston, Texas, USA
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naa.ganesan@gmail.com



Annam - the Himalayan Superbird and Tirukkural

Tiruvaluvar is generally thought to be of Jaina religion

- The first four chapters of his work, praising Theerthankarar
- His strict vegetarianism
 - He does not even approve of meat consumption given as alms in the Bhiksha vessel, a practice of Buddhist monks.
- Abstinence from alcohol
- Importance given to the Ascetics
- Impermanence of Life and his preaching of equality among castes.

Annam - the Himalayan Superbird and Tirukkural

- India is a unique civilization in the World
 - Lots of time contemplating on soul and afterlife.
- Result is science of Yoga. Linguistics, especially Phonetics and the letter-order of Indic languages like Tamil and Sanskrit.
- Jainism emphasizes “Tavam” (Penance) for the emancipation of the human Soul.
- Older layers of religious thoughts begin to resurface in the form of Jainism and continue to develop such as idol worship and theory of Karma.
- Buddhism was born later from this environment of *Śramaṇism*.

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What is “The Bird” referred to in Kural 338?

- குடம்பை தனித்தொழியப் புள் பறந்தற்றே
உடம்பொடு உயிரிடை நட்பு
- *kuṭampai tanittu o.liyap pu! parantarrē
uṭampoṭu uyiriṭai natpu (Kural 338)*
- Birds fly away, and leave the nest deserted bare;
Such is the short-lived friendship soul and body share.
- Translation by Dr. G. U. Pope

What is “The Bird” referred to in Kural 338?

Most likely, the bird in Kural 338 is *Hamsa/Annam*

- *annam* is the bar-headed geese visiting South India each Winter
- *annam* = hamsa in Sanskrit
- The ancients did not know where they come from and when and where they depart
- So an apt metaphor for the Soul in living beings.

Sangam poets wondered why *annam* do not lay eggs here or raise their young. Their nests are considered to be in the Himalayas (*Kalittokai, marutakkali*).



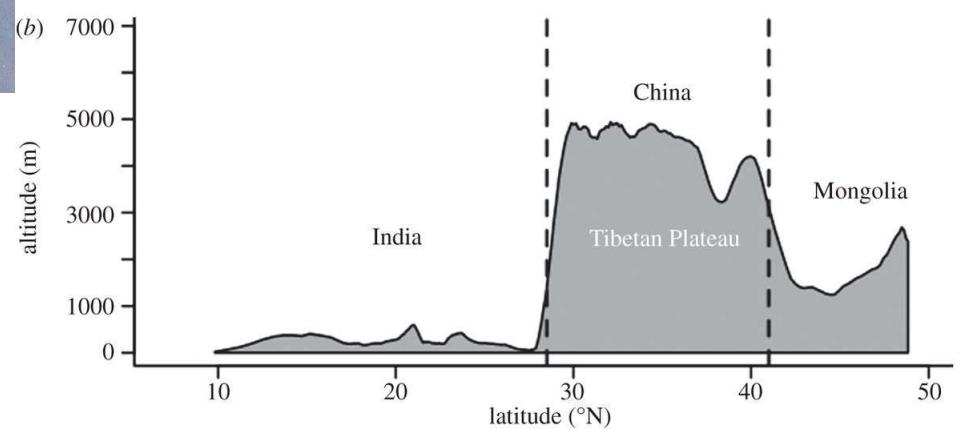
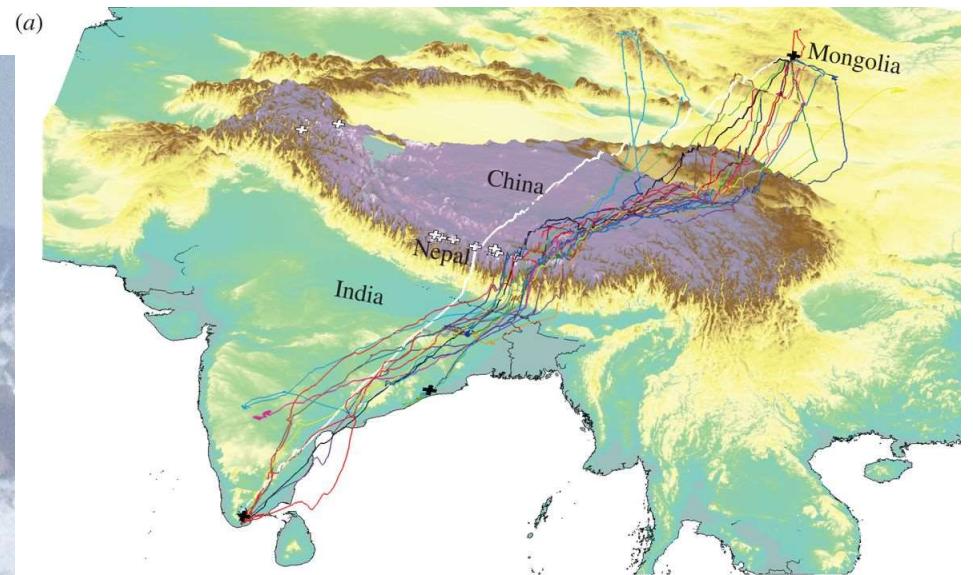
The bird in Kural 338 is Hamsa/*Annam*

In the bowl entombed in Buddhist stupa,
the departed soul is 338 is Hamsa/*Annam*
(the bar-headed geese)



annam bird representing Buddha's soul, Taxila, First century CE

Himalayan Superbird, Bar-headed Goose = Hamsa/Annam



Bar headed Geese crossing the mighty Himalayas

Elevation crossed over by Annam in their journey to south India twice a year

Anna uvama urupu : Dhvani with Hamsa/Annam

- In Tamil, there are many particles of comparison, *uvamai urupu*. Among them, Tiruvalluvar uses “*anna*” in two couplets dealing with the subject of love. There seems to be a hint suggesting the bird name, *annam*.

- *vāltal uyirkku annal āyilai cātal
atarku annal nīnkum ītattu* (Kural 1124)

Life with my jewel is existence; Death it is her severance.

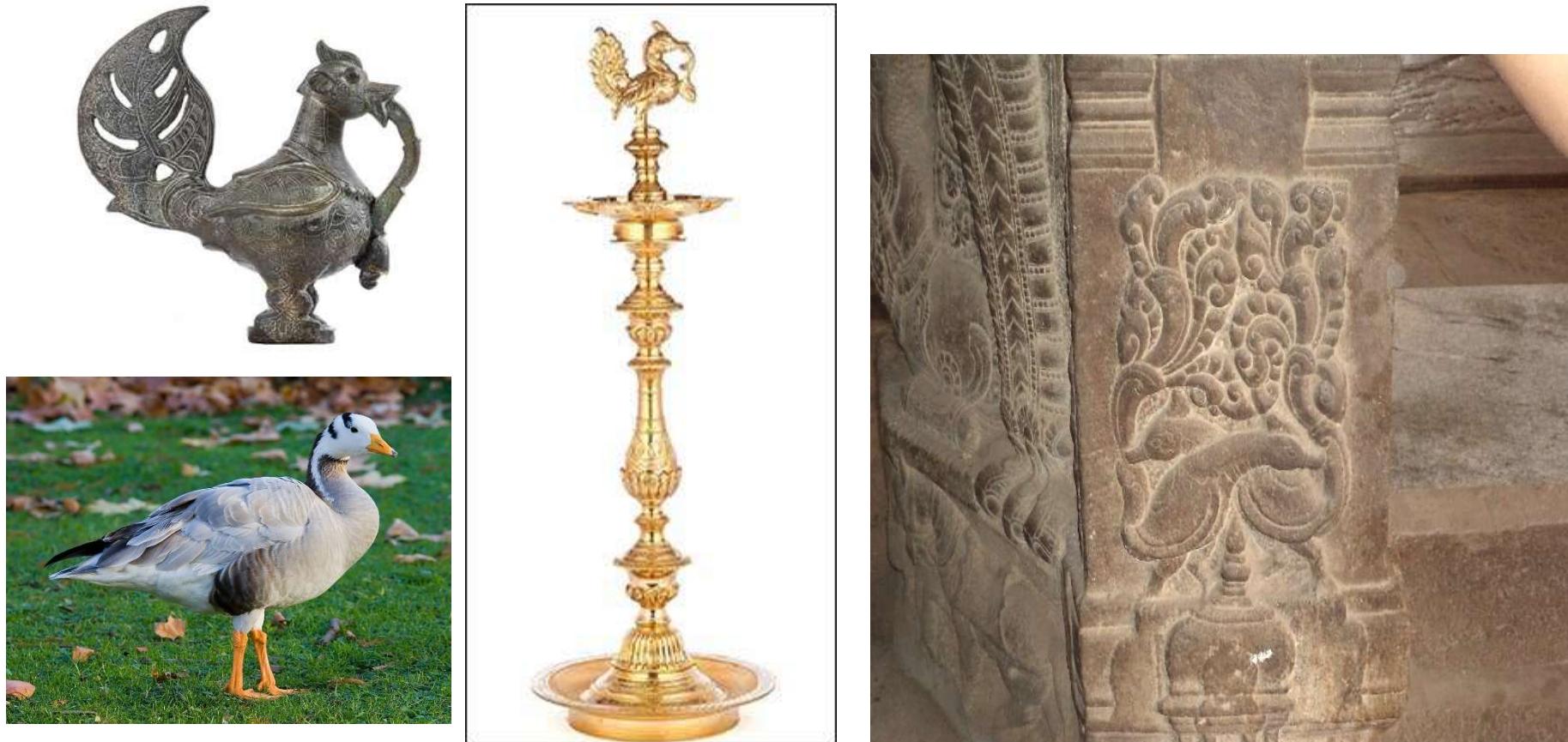
- Here, life and death are compared to times of lovers either together or in separation.
- The use of *annal* is noteworthy.

- Another Tirukkural in the same pattern where *anna*, the comparative particle is used with the technique of suggestion to *annam* bird. It is a rarity that Tirukkural uses the same phrase, *uṭampotu uyiriṭai - naṭpu* in Kural 338 and 1122.

*uṭampotu uyir-iṭai enna marru anna
matantaiyoṭu em-iṭai naṭpu* (Kural 1122)

(Love between me and this lady is like bond between soul and body.)

Over Time, Artistic Embellishments on Annam



Anna Vilakku – Hamsa Oil Lamp
Note the addition of peacock feather tail

A loving pair of Annam birds
– Their feathers are used in beds

Europeans bringing Swans to zoos - Swans as Annam - Changes in 19th century Art



Damayanti sends Hamsa as Messenger
Painting by Raja Ravi Varma



*Saint Ramakrishna is Paramahansa
Sri Ramakrishna Math Logo in Calcutta*

Conclusion

- In Tamil, *annam* is the Himalayan migratory superbird.
- Jaina monks compiled a book of morals called *Nālaṭiyār*.
It mentions a powerful ability of the *annam*.
Let us try to emulate it.
- Learning has no limits; the learners' days are few.
If they would calmly reflect, diseases are also many.
Let them carefully learn what is essential,
making a good choice like the *annam* bird
which drinks the milk separating it from the water!

Thank You All.